

# Creating a Man for the Future: A Narrative Analysis of Male In-Migrants and Their Constructions of Masculinities in a Rural Context

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## Abstract

Most research on rural masculinity focuses on sedentary and agricultural lifestyles. Based on fieldwork and interviews with 18 male newcomers, this article explores constructions of masculinities among in-migrants engaged in several occupations and entrepreneurial activities in Finnmark, in Northern Norway. Building on the concept of hegemonic masculinities, we show how a specific combination of compact geography, a changing labour market and the Nordic dual-earner family model and welfare state create a rural space of opportunities in which male in-migrants construct themselves as men for the future. The respondents emphasise the importance of intensive fatherhood, being a supportive spouse, and commitment to leisure activities as well as their professional identities. Contrary to studies of rural masculinities emphasising 'macho' traits, our analysis demonstrates the prevalence of novel nonhegemonic masculinities among in-migrants in northernmost Norway.

## Introduction

Finnmark is located in northernmost Norway. The region is populated by only 75,000 inhabitants<sup>1</sup> and has suffered from steady population decline for decades. Since 2007, however, Finnmark's population has stabilised and begun to show an upward trend, primarily due to in-migration to Finnmark's four biggest settlements. Although in-migrants represent an increasingly important component of Finnmark's population, they are neglected in most current research, with only a few exceptions (Aure 2008; Flemmen and Lotherington 2008; Gerrard 2013; Munkejord 2014).

In fact, two processes at the intersection of migration and the labour market currently contribute to shape everyday life in Finnmark. First, international in-migration is growing, along with the number of immigrant firms (Special tables Statistics Norway). Second, the region has recently experienced a re-industrialisation,

exemplified by the 2002 establishment of the petroleum industry in Hammerfest. This male-dominated industry's need for skilled and educated workers has led to increased labour market possibilities, especially for men, and hence also to an increased national in-migration of men (Eikeland *et al.* 2009).

Fulsås (1997) has described how Finnmark for centuries was represented as backward, less modernised, and 'the other' in public records. Today, however, Finnmark is part of the modern Nordic welfare regime (Esping-Anderson 1990), which is built on a dual-earner family model, family friendly labour market regulations and extensive childcare allowances. Furthermore, social and economic indicators in Finnmark, such as educational, employment and income levels, are currently nearing the national average. Despite recent developments and the alternative stories of the North produced in research and popular culture, Paulgaard claims that dichotomies such as 'centre-periphery' and 'urbanity-rurality' continue to inform sociocultural constructions and understandings of this region (Paulgaard 2009).

In light of the recent re-industrialisation and related changes in Finnmark, and in view of changing perceptions of gender and fatherhood in Norway in general (Leira 2006; Kitterød and Rønsen 2012), this article focuses on the experiences of men who have migrated to northernmost Norway. Drawing on 18 in-depth interviews, we discuss how male newcomers engage with the rural space when constructing their masculine identities in Finnmark. In particular, we focus on the gendered and spatial production/reproduction interface in their everyday life narratives.

Our analysis is inspired by Raewyn Connell, who defines masculinity as 'simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture' (Connell 1995, p. 71). Connell departs from the idea of a plurality of masculinities and with the concept of hegemonic masculinities she highlights the hierarchical power relation among men and explains how hegemonic masculinities 'ideologically legitimate the global subordination of women to men' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832). Moreover, as emphasised by Berg and Longhurst (2003), we understand masculinities as time-sensitive, geographically contingent, relational, unstable, and contested. We demonstrate how the combination of an arctic geography with short distances within the locality, strong welfare institutions supporting the dual-earner family model, and a changing labour market creates a rural space of opportunities. The analysis reveals that within this particular rural space, the male in-migrants construct themselves as men for the future by emphasising intensive fatherhood, being a supportive spouse, and engagement in leisure activities, craftsmanship, and professional identities. The identified aspects of male identities challenge representations of hegemonic, or patriarchal, rural masculinities and indicate current changes in gender relations. In addition, our findings demonstrate that masculine practices in the northernmost part of a Nordic welfare state may be more fluid and dynamic, than previous studies from other rural locations might suggest. The article thus questions and nuances the mainstream perception of rural areas as characterised by male patriarchal gender roles, as discussed in the literature (Hauan 1999; Campbell and Bell 2000; Little 2002; Shortall 2002; Bryant and Pini 2009). In this study, male in-migrants seem to experience Northern communities as

gendered spaces in which they can and do construct their identities and futures in primarily nonhegemonic ways, which means non-suppressive of women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Filteau 2014).

First, we introduce the context for this study. We then outline the theoretical and methodological framework adopted, analyse four of the stories in the empirical data, and conclude.

## Context

Although Finnmark County is located in the northernmost region of Norway, its proximity to the Gulf Stream yields a relatively mild climate. The population density in the region is low, but most coastal settlements are highly concentrated. Since 2007, Finnmark's population has stabilised and increased due to birth rates and in-migration to the four towns of Alta, Hammerfest, Kirkenes, and Vadsø (whose populations range between 5,000 and 14,000). These settlements offer a relatively varied labour market consisting of skilled and unskilled jobs in various sectors, including the county administration (Vadsø); the research and educational sector (Alta); the health sector, border and mining industries (the Kirkenes area); and the petroleum and health sectors (Hammerfest).

In 2012, 9.2 per cent of Finnmark's total population were immigrants, whereas the national average is 11 per cent (Høydahl 2013). Finnmark's immigrants hold a variety of residence permits and originate primarily from Russia, Finland, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Thailand, Afghanistan, and Somalia. There is also an increasing national in-migration and return migration to some areas in the region. Combined with the continued high rates of out-migration, the increasing in-migration makes Finnmark a region of significant geographical mobility.

The self-employment rate in the region is relatively low at approximately 4 per cent. However, due to increased international in-migration, the number of immigrant firms in the area is expanding. According to special tables prepared by Statistics Norway, there were approximately 170 immigrant entrepreneurs in Finnmark in 2010. Moreover, the petroleum industry has begun to operate in Finnmark, especially in the town of Hammerfest, where Statoil's Snow White gas field was established in 2002. Since then, the industry and its associated supply chains' need for skilled and educated workers has led to in-commuting and national as well as international in-migration into Hammerfest and more than 1,000 new inhabitants during the last years (Eikeland *et al.* 2009). Because this industry is so male-dominated, many of these newcomers are men.

## Understanding rural masculinities in times of mobility

According to Paulgaard (2009, p. 154), 'the coding of the northern periphery as the complete antithesis to the modern, urban civilisation seems to be more or less constant' in Finnmark. The construction of the Northern periphery as a comparatively backward and traditional space is not unique to Norway and is observed in other parts of the Nordic countries (Berglund *et al.* 2005; Stenbacka 2011) and in the UK (Shields 1991). Similarly, rural spaces have also been constructed as unmodern and patriarchal

in many countries, as argued by Little (2002) and Shortall (2002). Rural may be an ambiguous concept, even for the readers of *Sociologia Ruralis*. The term may describe geographical locations, materialities or landscapes with a low population density, and situated at a certain distance from urban cities. It may also refer to socioeconomic practices in resource-based industries, or sociocultural constructions, symbols, and representations (Halfacree 2004; Munkejord 2009; Haugen and Str ete 2011). We define Finnmark as a rural space based on its remote location, low and scattered population, and relative dependence on natural resources.

In recent decades, a significant body of literature has been produced on rural masculinities (Campbell and Bell 2000). This research has focused on numerous issues ranging from men's practices to representations of men related to their involvement in farming and logging (Brandth 1995, 2002; Little 2002, 2003; Brandth and Haugen 2005), hunting (Bye 2003), fishing (Gerrard 2005, 2013), place-based leisure activities (Kenway and Hickey-Moody 2009; Trell *et al.* 2014), and disaster management (Tyler and Fairbrother 2013). This research has shown how hard physical labour, independence, toughness, and mastery of technology and nature have been key sites for the construction of rural masculine identities. Likewise, rural masculinities and femininities have largely been imagined within a patriarchal, heterosexual construct in which the man clearly dominates the woman in the gender hierarchy and distinct gender roles are delineated: 'he' is responsible for machinery and breadwinning and 'she' is responsible for care-giving activities and household duties (Little 2002, 2003; Shortall 2002; Tyler and Fairbrother 2013). However, recent studies from Norway and elsewhere have revealed alternative, nonhegemonic constructions of rural masculinities characterised by egalitarian fathering, homemaking and community practices (Brandth and Overrein 2013). Furthermore, increased mobility calls for a better understanding of the relationship between gender and mobilities in the Northern peripheries (Walsh *et al.* 2013). In this study, examining constructions of masculinities among male newcomers in Finnmark was expected to be particularly evocative. This is because in-migrants, having lived in various geographical contexts characterised by different gender contracts (Forsberg 2001), were expected to be especially conscious and articulate about their own gendered identities and negotiations after having settled in the rural north.

Masculinities, according to Connell (2014), describe both the position and the practice of men in the gender system and the effects of that position. For Connell, there is no definitive way to be a man; instead, there are a variety of masculinities that act together in various ways. These plural gender identities are framed by their relationships to a hegemonic masculinity, which 'occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations' (Connell 1995). Thus, although there are multiple masculinities, the hegemonic form is associated with authority and social power and entails a suppression of other masculinities and femininities 'that allows men's dominance over women to continue' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832). By contrast, dominant masculinities, according to Filteau (2014), are popular, celebrated, common and/or current forms of masculinities. Dominant masculinities, therefore, are hegemonic only if they 'legitimate men's domination over women' (Filteau 2014, p. 397). Dominant nonhegemonic masculinities may thus represent alternative or competing identity constructions among men who treat 'masculine' and 'feminine'

practices, spaces, and values as equally valuable (Szabo 2014, p. 230). Dominant masculinity, in other words, is perhaps best understood as a widely accepted and politically correct mode of masculinity in various contexts.

The distinction between hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities is, according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) vital to understanding the hierarchical relationship among femininities and masculinities, as well as among masculinities, and thus the struggle for power (see also Filteau 2014, pp. 397–8). In our study, we apply the concept of dominant masculinities. This allows us to identify a trend in which common and popular masculinities are constructed in less hegemonic and suppressive ways than has been previously found in other rural regions. Our findings may indicate changes in the gender hierarchies in Finnmark, and hence point to the relevance of new interpretations and understandings of rural masculinities.

In his critical review of masculinity studies, Messerschmidt (2012) argues that some researchers use the concept of hegemonic masculinity simply to define certain dominant 'masculine traits' (see also Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). This is, according to him, a mistaken use of the concept, and he hence warns that this practice 'may reify traditional patriarchal views of men' (Messerschmidt 2012, p. 7). He subsequently calls for more nuanced masculinity studies that disrupt this reifying approach. In order to respond to this call, we investigate how masculinities are narrated and constructed in Finnmark. As recommended by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), Messerschmidt (2012) and Filteau (2014), we use the distinction between hegemonic and dominant masculinities to analyse and understand different forms of masculinities.

In summary, we conceptualise Finnmark as a contested, gendered, rural space. This article in particular focuses on the spatial dimensions and the production/reproduction interface to explore how constructions of masculinities are produced by male in-migrants in northernmost Norway.

## Method and participants

This study uses a narrative methodology. Narration has been defined as a 'specifically situated point of access for us to the narrator's past and anticipated future' (Cohen and Rapport 1995, p. 8). A central assumption of this approach is that people construct stories about their lives and that these narratives exert a co-constitutive power by giving direction and meaning to the informants' daily lives (Cullum 2003). This article is based upon data from two research projects, as explained below.

Munkejord's project studied immigrant entrepreneurs in Finnmark. Data were gathered through field visits and in-depth interviews with nine male and 20 female entrepreneurs with immigrant backgrounds. For the purpose of this article, we have analysed the narratives of the nine male immigrant entrepreneurs involved in different business ventures, including a grocery shop, a garage, cafés, an architectural firm, a tourism business, and firms providing acupuncture and massage therapy. This article highlights the stories of two immigrant entrepreneurs: Paul and Lars.

Aure's project studied in-migrants working in the petroleum sector in Hammerfest in Finnmark. Data were gathered through field visits, observations, documents

and in-depth interviews with 12 men and seven women.<sup>2</sup> Nine of the interviews with the male in-migrants were analysed for the purpose of this article, which focuses on the stories of Truls and Theo. In both projects, a variety of recruitment strategies were used such as e.g., the Internet (including Facebook); local consultants, municipal business advisors, and employers as well as the snowball method.

The 18 respondents presented in Table 1 (below) can be divided into four migratory trajectories: (a) refugees (five participants), (b) international lifestyle migrants (four participants), (c) national return lifestyle migrants (five participants), and (d) national career migrants (four participants). After obtaining the residence permit, the five participants defined as refugees were assigned to Finnmark and they later chose to stay in the North. Those defined as international lifestyle migrants explained that they settled in Finnmark to experience something 'different' and 'exotic' in an Arctic region. The Norwegian lifestyle and return migrants were attracted to the 'Arctic' because of the new and interesting employment opportunities in the region, but also due to their preference to live close to their extended families and the familiar nature. The national career migrants' primary motivation was to obtain an interesting, suitable, and high-paid job in the petroleum sector in order to build their CVs.

The participants came from various urban and rural backgrounds, and most of them were highly educated. Ten had university degrees, four had craftsman certificates, and four had relevant work experience but no higher education. Their family compositions were varied: twelve lived in long-term heterosexual relationships and had children living at home, one was a divorced father, and five had no children. The latter two groups were either single or lived with heterosexual partners with no children or adult children. The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 55 years.

As we were not so much interested in behaviour, but rather in men's representations of their masculine identities, 18 male respondents were questioned about their childhood, education, and previous work experience; their migration stories; and their everyday life in the rural north. We in particular asked about work and family, place attachments, and mobile practices, but did not explicitly discuss 'masculinity' and 'rurality' because this could have prompted them to produce politically correct responses. In this article, hence, we have analysed men's stories, but acknowledge that men and women may disagree on these representations.

Most of the participants were interviewed at work, although a few preferred to be interviewed either at home or in a café. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian and lasted between 35 and 130 minutes; the average was 75–80 minutes. All the interviews were conducted by the authors<sup>3</sup> and thereafter analysed by using a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006). During the analysis, we used perspectives about masculinities, ruralities/place and rural migration as sensitising concepts. Memos summarising the themes addressed by each participant were created and discussed among the authors. Quotations from the interviews were translated into English for this article. To preserve confidentiality, all the names are fictitious and the ages given are approximate. See the attachment for an overview of the participants. This article presents the stories of Paul, Lars, Truls and Theo, but the subsequent analysis and discussion are based on an analysis of all the narratives in this study. Though anonymised, these are 'real' people, not constructed ideal types. The next section presents and analyses their stories.

Table 1: Overview of the participants

Name and age (approx)	Region of origin	Primary reason for migration	Family situation	Education	Current work situation
Ali, 30	Asia	Refugee	Spouse from his country, no children yet	Primary	Self-employed (Restaurant)
Julius, 45	Asia	Refugee	Spouse from his country, three children (kindergarten and school age)	Primary, plus massage education in Norway	Self-employed (Massage therapist)
Paul, 45	Africa	Refugee	Spouse from his country, four children (school age)	Primary	Self-employed (Retail store and café)
Mehmet, 35	Asia	Refugee	Spouse from Norway, one child (baby)	Skilled (craftsman certificates from country of origin and Norway)	Self-employed (Garage)
Ahmed, 35	Southern Norway	Lifestyle migration, former refugee from Asia to Southern Norway	Spouse from his country, one child (baby)	Primary	Self-employed (Restaurant)
Erik, 35	Western Europe	Lifestyle migration	Spouse from his country, two children (kindergarten)	University degree	Self-employed (Architectural firm)
Vladimir, 40	Russia	Lifestyle migration	Spouse from his country, two children (kindergarten and school)	University degree	Self-employed (Tourism agency)

Table 1: continued

Name and age (approx)	Region of origin	Primary reason for migration	Family situation	Education	Current work situation
Lars, 45	Western Europe	Lifestyle migration	Spouse from his country, three children (kindergarten and school age)	University degree	Self-employed (Acupuncturist)
Jürgen, 55	Western Europe	Lifestyle migration	Spouse from his country, adult children	University degree	Self-employed (Restaurant)
Terje, 40	Northern Norway	Return lifestyle migration	Divorced, three children (aged two, 17, and adult)	Skilled	Petroleum sector
Fredrik, 25	Northern Norway	Return lifestyle migration	Single	University degree	Petroleum sector
Heine, 35	Northern Norway	Return lifestyle migration	Spouse from southern Norway, two children (babies)	University degree	Petroleum sector
Truls, 35	Northern Norway	Return lifestyle migration	Spouse from Finnmark, three children (babies and kindergarten)	University degree	Petroleum sector
Edgar, 25	Northern Norway	Return lifestyle migration	Spouse from Finnmark, two children (baby and kindergarten)	Skilled and began university degree	Middle manager in the petroleum sector
Theo, 35	Southern Norway	Career migration	Spouse from Southern Norway, one child (school)	University degree	Petroleum sector
Elling, 35	Southern Norway	Career migration	Single	University degree	Petroleum sector
Ole, 25	Southern Norway	Career migration	Single	Skilled	Petroleum sector
Edward, 45	Northern Norway	Career migration	Spouse from Northern Norway, two children (school age)	University degree	Manager in the petroleum sector



### Living in Finnmark: four case-studies

The stories of our four participants illustrate the dilemmas, processes, and practices common to most of our respondents. Moreover, they represent a variety of social backgrounds and various migratory trajectories. Paul and Lars are self-employed immigrants, whereas Truls and Theo are Norwegian in-migrants employed in the petroleum sector.

#### *Case 1: Paul, an entrepreneur from a country in Africa*

Paul is originally from a country in Africa. After having fled due to war in his home region, he lived for several years in a refugee camp, where he ran a bookstore with his wife. Approximately 10 years ago, he came to Finnmark with his oldest son, who was 10 years old at the time, through the United Nations (UN) refugee quota system. His wife, Mary, and their younger children were not given the same status in the UN system and had to remain behind. Arriving in Finnmark during the winter shocked Paul. He recalled:

It was really hard in the beginning. I came in March. It was snowy, it was dark. It was a new experience. I came from a city of one million inhabitants directly to this small town with an unfamiliar language, an unfamiliar climate, an unfamiliar culture – everything was unfamiliar. That was so hard.<sup>4</sup>

Paul explained, however, that he immediately began to make an effort to thrive in the North. He wanted to earn a good income so that he could apply for family reunification as soon as possible. He also wanted to improve the lives of other refugees in the community. Only weeks after his arrival, he launched an association for refugees and organised a gospel choir and a band.

Paul learned Norwegian and completed the two-year compulsory introductory programme for refugees. He became employed as a part-time care worker and in addition obtained a part-time position in a local church. Also, he wanted to start a retail shop that would serve both other immigrants as well as the majority population. After a year of preparation, Paul opened his shop while keeping his two part-time jobs. Finally, after four years, he fulfilled the requirements to apply for family reunification. Upon arrival in Finnmark, his wife Mary learned Norwegian and began to work in their international food shop.

During the years that Paul and his oldest son lived alone in Finnmark, Paul performed all of the household tasks and cared for his son. After the family was reunited, Paul stated that he shared domestic tasks and duties with his wife, though assisted by their teenage children. Paul's community engagement was rewarded with a local culture prize from the municipality. According to the local newspaper, Paul was the first immigrant ever to receive this award.

#### *Case 2: Lars, an international lifestyle migrant*

Lars and his wife Karen are from a Nordic country. As a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine, Lars ran a small acupuncture business in his home country before

moving to Finnmark. Karen's mother was originally from Finnmark, and Karen had therefore heard about the 'fantastic Northern landscapes' as a child. When Karen became pregnant, the couple decided to move north to stay for a year. This was possible because Karen was able to receive maternity-leave payments from their country of origin while living in Norway. Lars hence temporarily closed his business.

Initially, Lars found Finnmark strikingly different from his country of origin: the new home place was very calm, and the landscapes were beautiful but also somewhat wild. To supplement the maternity benefits, Lars began to give acupuncture treatments. As the word spread, his business prospered. In their leisure time, Lars and Karen went for walks in the mountains, spent time with relatives, and made new friends. When the year had passed, they were not ready to leave. They stayed another year. Lars continued to give acupuncture treatments, Karen found local employment, and their child entered kindergarten. When Karen became pregnant with their second child, they decided to settle in Finnmark and bought an old house. Lars worked part-time as an acupuncturist and spent his remaining time renovating the house. After four years, their new home was finally ready for occupancy. At the time of the interview, however, Lars explained that he had recently begun a new project to enlarge the house, and he was therefore working part-time at his clinic. Karen was again the family's main breadwinner and caretaker, as she had been during the first renovation period. Lars said that he felt guilty about doing less than Karen in terms of cleaning, caring, cooking, and other household duties, but that he would make up for it after finishing the enlargement project. In response to a direct question, he explained that his goal was a 'balanced sharing' of tasks. He also stated that he was looking forward to the day when he could say, 'Now I earn more money than my wife again', adding, 'There is this income imbalance between us now, and I don't like it!' When asked what he enjoyed about Finnmark, Lars said, 'I'm a nature person. I really enjoy being in the nature and using the nature. I find peace there ... so Finnmark is more me as I am today'.

### *Case 3: Truls, a national lifestyle migrant*

Truls and his wife Vilde were born and raised in Hammerfest in Finnmark. Both have university degrees. For several years, they lived and worked in various places in Norway and abroad. However, when the 'perfect job' became available in Hammerfest, Truls decided to move northwards again. He missed his family, the mountains, the autumn storms, and hunting trips: 'Moving north would have been out of the question a few years ago. If you wanted to get an education and develop yourself, Hammerfest was not the place to be'. However, 'this attitude has changed', he explained.

At first his wife Vilde stayed behind in Southern Norway to finish her studies. The flexibility, high income, and work-related mobility of Truls' new job in Finnmark, however, made it possible for them to regularly meet. When they began to talk about having children, Vilde decided to move to Hammerfest as well. Once relocated, she got an interesting job fitting her education. Truls told that there were three main advantages of living in Hammerfest: (1) being close to his parents and parents-in-law

(‘they are great babysitters’); (2) infrastructure, short distances and hardly any daily travelling time within their new community (‘there are short distances here, and this gives us more time for work, for family life and for leisure activities’) and (3) the proximity to the surrounding landscapes, which meant easy access to the various outdoor activities they liked to engage in.

When Truls and Vilde had their first child, Truls ‘took the maximum quota of parental leave’. This meant that he took full paternal leave while his partner took the maternal quota, in addition to the common parental quota that couples may share as they like. After their first child was born, Truls began to find his job unsatisfactory, and was able to get a more family-friendly position. At the time of the interview, Truls rarely worked overtime and travelled far less than before. ‘This makes it possible to be the father I want to be’, he said. His new job was interesting and relevant, but not as interesting as the position he had left. However, at the moment, his priority was to spend time with his family, taking the children to kindergarten, and sharing daily household tasks.

#### *Case 4: Theo, a career migrant*

Both Theo and his wife Hanne participated in the interview while their six-year-old played nearby. The family recently moved to Finnmark in order for Theo to start working in a well-paid job in the petroleum sector. Theo was trained as a nurse. After working in a hospital, he fulfilled his ‘boyhood dream’ when he got employed at a drilling platform. At the platform he worked two weeks on, and four weeks off, a rotation common in the Norwegian offshore petroleum industry while Hanne ran her own business.

Theo explained that he found the job at the drilling platform ‘challenging and tough’. The job consisted of a lot of waiting for cases of illness or accidents to happen: It was therefore boring and lonely. When being at home he did nothing but fetch the newspaper. The couple joked in a friendly way about this, indicating that apart from some household work he had no important tasks to perform while being at home. Hence, although Theo and Hanne agreed that working rotation may sound attractive and remunerating, for them it did not work very well. It was also hard for Theo having to be completely away from the family for two weeks at a time. After a while, Theo got a new job that required a lot of work-related travelling, and he was even more away from home than before. Theo regretted that his new job prevented him from attending parental meetings, taking daily care of his child, and engaging in everyday activities in the home such as doing the laundry and cooking. Theo and Hanne, moreover, were provoked by the irregularity of the new job, and by how Theo’s long working hours forced Hanne to take on all the responsibilities at home. Therefore, when Theo obtained an interesting land-based and stable position in the petroleum sector, they gladly moved northwards. ‘Finnmark is a place of opportunities’, Theo said during the interview, echoing an emerging positive public and political discourse about northernmost Norway. Upon arrival in Finnmark, Hanne, too, was soon offered a relevant job. Theo enjoyed the wage, the useful experience he obtained and the opportunity to re-engage in the everyday life of the family.

## Spaces of gendered opportunities

Finnmark is an intriguing geographical location being part of the Nordic dual-earner model, while at the same time being a remote and arctic space with various on-going labour market and population changes. In this section, based on the narratives presented above, we analyse how Finnmark for the respondents represents an arena for constructing novel dominant, yet nonhegemonic, masculinities. In the following, we will analyse their identity constructions and gendered negotiations highlighting the family/work intersection, the region's new labour market possibilities, as well as its' leisure and outdoor recreation opportunities. But first, as a background for the further analysis and discussion: some few more words about the dual-earner family model, and the shared parenting regime in Norway.

### *The dual-earner model and the shared parenting regime*

Traditionally, one of the primary distinctions in the gender hierarchy has been the division between production and reproduction, which posits that the supposed male public sphere of production is more valuable than the feminine private sphere of reproduction, and that parenting is a female task. Until the 1970s, women were seen as 'the only suitable parents to provide care and compassion' (Brandth and Overrein 2013, p. 97). Since that time, however, parenting has partly moved from the private to the public sphere, and new moral and political obligations regarding parenting have developed. In today's Norway, almost as many women as men perform paid work outside of the family, and both parents are 'expected' to be involved in intensive parenting. The new parenting regime has been strengthened by various policy initiatives (Brandth and Kvande 2002; Ellingsaeter 2006). These include, *inter alia*, one year of universal paid parental leave.<sup>5</sup> At the time of this study, parental leave policies required fathers to take 12 weeks of leave. This quota was established to promote more active fathering and several studies suggest that Norwegian fathers have become more engaged in the domestic sphere in recent years, particularly with respect to childcare (Ranson 2001; Kitterød and Pettersen 2006; Kvande 2009; Kitterød and Rønsen 2012). In addition, an extensive, public childcare programme has been established for all children above the age of 12 months. These children can be cared for in kindergartens for a strictly regulated and low price.<sup>6</sup> Hence, in view of this dual-earner model and shared parenting regime, this study poses the question: how did the respondents construct their masculine identities in the intersection between work, family, leisure and landscape?

### *Gender, place, fathering and everyday life in the north*

The feminist geographical literature has established that places are gendered in different ways (McDowell 1999; Little 2002; Berg 2004). In Forsberg's (2001) words, this involves specific gender contracts. We hold that the gendering of place entails at least two processes that can be separated analytically. First, in moving from A to B, a migrant leaves one spatial gender order and enters another, which may lead to the negotiation of gendered meanings and identities within the new spatial frame of

reference. For Paul, who fled from Africa, and several of the other participants, moving to Finnmark meant adjusting to a quite different gender order, including local expectations associated with the gender-divided labour market and the dual-earner family model. Second, migration brings the newcomer into contact with a new spatial materiality, new people, and new relationships, which constitutes a different space of social, cultural, and economic opportunities. For example, when returning to Hammerfest during the 'pioneer phase' of the petroleum development in the Barents Sea, Truls encountered a different hometown, than the Hammerfest that he had left some years earlier. Settling in the current Hammerfest, made it possible for him to develop his career, fulfil his desire to be an outdoorsman and become a more involved father and son.

Some of the respondents arrived in localities in Finnmark that were characterised by recruitment problems and a lack of competent labour. These rural spaces gave them an opportunity to participate in gendered labour markets in various ways: Paul found part-time jobs in the care sector and in the church. Although economically self-sufficient, Paul worked in sectors considered feminine and inferior in the local labour market (Hirsch *et al.* 2010; Lanninger and Sunstrom 2014). However, in addition to his part-time jobs, Paul started an international food shop in order to make other immigrants 'feel more at home in the North', as he explained. In becoming an entrepreneur, Paul entered what is often considered a 'masculine' professional identity (Ahl 2006). Many people, including municipal authorities, appreciated Paul's endeavours. This recognition added value to his position in the hierarchical social system of his new local community. He became a role model among immigrant men. Like several of the other immigrant entrepreneurs, Paul emphasised that self-employment made him feel independent, and allowed him to achieve a higher social status in the local community.

Before settling in Finnmark, Theo worked in a rotation shift in the petroleum sector, and thereafter in a job requiring lots of work-related travelling. Neither of these jobs were satisfactory to Theo. The offshore job confirmed his boyhood ideal of masculinity, but he felt it was boring. The long days off at home in this job gave no masculine confirmation. The travelling job prevented him from being the present father and active and sharing spouse he wanted to be. Hence, moving to Finnmark with his family enabled Theo to engage in a more intensive fathering and everyday household tasks, but also to bring home a large pay cheque, receive benefits, and gain valuable work experience in an interesting and highly masculine connoted industry. Settling in Finnmark thus created a space that allowed him to construct himself as a modern career and family oriented man.

Lars, moreover, renovated his family's house 'with his own hands', a highly masculinised activity. He nevertheless felt the strain of not being the family's primary breadwinner. He also said that he felt guilty about being unable to take care of his children as much as he wanted, and of being unable to meet the standard of balanced sharing of tasks and duties in the home. He justified this situation by stating that it was temporary. Truls on the other hand, even after having downscaled his job in Finnmark in order to be a present father, still held a high-skilled and rewarding position, and he still made more money than his wife. He temporarily gave priority to fathering – at the low cost of slightly postponing the furthering of his professional

career. What enabled both Theo and Truls to construct their new and preferred life, was the new labour market opportunities in the petroleum sector. The projects of our respondents were also supported by the dual earner family friendly policies and childcare institutions.

*Outdoor recreation in arctic Norway: an arena for new constructions and reinterpretations of masculinities*

In the literature, outdoor activities, particularly hunting and fishing, are considered as important aspects of rural hegemonic masculinity because of their association with 'toughness, wildness, and male camaraderie' (Bye 2009). According to Bye, when rural men engage in outdoor activities with other men, they are participating in a form of male fellowship in which drinking, swearing, and toughness are vital components (Bye 2009). In line with Bye (2009), Bull (2009) understands fly-fishing as an activity that confirms macho traits. Contrary to this, Gurholt (2008) has shown that immersion in nature through e.g., hiking, hunting, fishing can be viewed as a way of expressing one's masculine identity through a sense of environmentalism. Gurholt (ibid) explains her analysis by referring to 'male activities', rather than to 'masculine traits' as such. Outdoor recreation, in other words, may have various meanings, and may be viewed as both spatially and culturally embedded and endorsed (Kenway and Hickey-Moody 2009). Furthermore, rural men may also engage in outdoor activities with their families and thereby construct themselves as responsible and caring fathers (Pedersen 1999; Munkejord 2011). These various outdoor practices may hence challenge traditional gendered meanings and interpretations of outdoor recreation activities. Our study includes examples of family-oriented outdoor practices as well as men hunting, fishing and being in the outdoors with male friends for recreation, physical fitness, mastery of nature, and for experiencing the beauty of the scenery. The outdoors is thus an important part of being a rural man in our study, but our findings challenge and extend the tough, patriarchal and 'macho' trait explanations identified by Bye (2009), Bull (2009) and Tyler and Fairbrother (2013). The dominant forms of outdoor recreational masculinities identified in our study are non-suppressive and do not legitimate men's dominance over women. They are therefore nonhegemonic.

*Discussion*

This study has shown that the rural place is an important component in the construction of local masculinities and gender relations. In particular, we have highlighted how a remote, rural region in Norway may be conducive to the formation of alternative, nonhegemonic masculinities that diverge from the negative or patriarchal rural gender constructions often thought to define such regions. In line with this, we find that our respondents experienced Finnmark as a space of opportunities related not only to the outdoor opportunities in the arctic landscape, but also related to work opportunities in self-employment and in the emerging industries, and the compact geography which allow for family friendly everyday life.

The study has also shown that most of the participants were eager to discuss their ideas about fatherhood in relation to mobility, personal career ambitions and income

level. They discussed their fathering role both in terms of their breadwinner role as well as their participation in domestic tasks and childcare, a distinction also highlighted by Brannen and Nilsen (2006), Holter (2007) and Ranson (2001). The importance and pride of taking a breadwinner role and earning a good income was in particular discussed by some of the participants working in the petroleum sector. In general, when the husband earns substantially more money than the wife, a gender order may be established that keeps the female partner economically dependent while giving the man more economic power. Among the immigrant entrepreneurs, being the main breadwinner was a concern to Lars, the acupuncturist, who explicitly expressed unease about (temporarily working part-time and hence) not being the main breadwinner in the family. Also, the other respondents either made more money, or as much money as their partners and thus probably did not feel challenged on this issue. Part-time work is predominantly used in female dominated sectors in Norway, and is generally associated with having a weak position in the labour market, and not being the main breadwinner in the family. In Finnmark, on the other hand, male part-time work may be interpreted in light of the rural tradition of combining several income producing activities, such as fishing, farming, construction work and transportation (Aure 2001). We hence argue that working part-time in Finnmark allowed Lars to reshape or renew traditional masculine practices of the rural north, even though he felt uneasy about not being the main breadwinner.

The importance of intensive and caring fathering was widely discussed, as well. In fact, some of the respondents working in the petroleum industry had chosen to temporarily downscale to what they considered less demanding jobs in order to be able to be present as active co-caretakers of their young children. According to the literature, when negotiating between paid work and caring tasks in the home, most men will still give priority to their paid work. Often this choice will be attributed to 'demands' from their employers (Ranson 2001; Brandth and Kvande 2002; Holter 2007; Kvande 2009). Furthermore, when men engage in the family by undertaking domestic work such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare, this may in some cases be interpreted as a threat to their breadwinning identities, as argued by Szabo (2014). This was not the case in our study. Rather, the respondents reflected upon how to balance household duties and care activities with their partners and talked about their responsibilities and engagement as involved fathers. More concretely, they talked about themselves cleaning the house, preparing food, buying food at the shops, taking care of the children, taking them and fetching them to and from the kindergarten and the school, attending meetings in kindergartens and school, following the children to various leisure activities as well as engaging in outdoor activities with the family. Hence, based on the narratives of our respondents and as found by Brandth and Overrein (2013), we argue that intensive fathering through breadwinning and childcare should be interpreted as an aspect of the novel, currently prevalent and dominant (non-suppressive) rural masculinity among in-migrant men in Finnmark.

## Conclusions

This article investigates newcomers' constructions of masculinities in a rural context in northernmost Norway. Some people tend to believe that there is a necessary



correlation between remoteness, rurality and patriarchal gender constructions. Hence, in dominant media representations, rural masculinities are often negatively contrasted with an urban ideal (Brandth 2002; Bull 2009; Stenbacka 2011; Trell *et al.* 2014). Similarly, in public discourse, men living in the rural North are often represented as marginalised losers (Stenbacka 2011). Such representations seem to promote what Stenbacka terms a 'non-negotiable rural identity' (Stenbacka 2011, p. 243). This stance may lead to a neglect of the agency of rural men in creating flexible and alternative identities and reify patriarchal traits as the basis of our understandings of masculinities.

In this study, however, the rural masculinities identified cannot be characterised as 'traditional', 'old-fashioned', 'patriarchal', or based on stereotypical traits of rural toughness, as some of the prior literature on rural masculinities has suggested. Instead, the analyses extend our understanding of what it means to be a 'breadwinning, independent rural man' (Brandth 1995) by showing that many of the male in-migrants in our study whether they are native of foreign in-migrants, believe that once they establish a family, it is important to work less than before, be more present or at least to justify why they fail to do so. Thus, downscaling paid work, engaging in intensive fathering and other household activities, and being a supportive partner are components of emerging forms of dominant nonhegemonic rural masculinities. These masculinities are similar to the constructions of masculinities identified in other Norwegian contexts (Aarseth 2007; Haavind 2011).

Whereas the male (and sometimes hegemonic) breadwinner position in the gender order still tends to reproduce women's economic dependency on men, our study identified constructions of dominant masculinities that do not legitimise an unequal gender order. These findings clearly represent a contrast to previous studies of patriarchal or hegemonic rural masculinities from other rural regions (Bryant and Pini 2009; Tyler and Fairbrother 2013). Moreover, most of the male in-migrants in our study interact with the Northern (arctic) landscape in ways that confirm their masculinity but without focusing on macho traits such as 'male toughness' in their narratives. Several of our respondents contribute actively to place-making through engagement in entrepreneurship and more generally in the local community. Thus, the act of settling in Finnmark is conceptualised by our participants as a project that creates meaningful new masculine identity positions for themselves as men – as fathers, spouses, workers and inhabitants of the rural north. So indeed, the male newcomers in Finnmark have found a space of opportunities to construct their (masculine) identities in various nonhegemonic ways, in which care and responsibility for their children and for the community play an important role. Perhaps the findings in this study even point to the contours of new rural masculinities that do not entail the suppression of women?

The dominant masculinities identified in this study may be the result of on-going gendered changes occurring more generally, at least at the discursive level, among younger (45 years of age and less) men and couples living in the Nordic countries, as also discussed in (Eydal and Rostgaard 2015). These changes are related to the Nordic countries, which are characterised by a dual-earner family model, family friendly labour market regulations and national equality politics. Haavind (2011, p. 29) has shown that young parents adhere to this discourse while simultaneously explaining



their traditional gendered practices as 'personal preferences'. This study reveals the predominance of equality as a normative discourse, and the prevalence of dominant (nonhegemonic) rural masculinities in Finnmark. At the same time, it indicates the need for closer observations through e.g., ethnographic fieldwork, and more detailed interviews to reveal the potential divergence between what is said and what is done at the household level. In line with Messerschmidt (2012), we argue that the concept of rural hegemonic masculinity may have been misused in research to refer to a collection of negative male traits instead of being employed as a concept that can help us understand the on-going and changing experiences and practices of masculinities in various places. Hence, the distinction between hegemonic and dominant (non-suppressive) masculinities may be a useful tool in future research for analysing the multiplicity of masculinities and the power dynamics of various spatial masculinities and femininities.

To conclude, this study is embedded in a national context in which gender egalitarian work-family arrangements are cultivated, a context that therefore differs from many other rural societies. Nevertheless, our findings may have implications for rural studies in general by revealing the significance of both the rural place as well as the national gender regime in the social construction and reconstruction of masculinities and femininities in various rural locations.

### Limitations and future research

By specifically analysing the experiences of rural male in-migrants, this study complements other studies of rural masculinities. Although narrative interviews are always vulnerable to recall bias (Terjesen and Elam 2009), the methodology chosen is highly appropriate for exploring constructions of rural masculinities in relation to work, family, and place among male newcomers in a rural context. However, it would have been advantageous to study the participants over a longer period to learn how their constructions of masculinities change over time. Gender relations are always arenas of tension and contestation, conditions that are continuously reproduced through migration flows between places. Because women are central to many of the processes that construct and contest masculinities, future research should, in line with the request from Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) focus more closely on the relationships between men's and women's practices and how the construction of masculinities and femininities are intertwined in and among various geographic locations. This might produce new interpretations of the meanings and contents of both femininities and masculinities in various rural and urban spaces.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> 2013 data provided by Statistics Norway: <http://www.ssb.no/befolkning/statistikker/folkendrkv/kvartal/2014-02-20?fane=tabell&sort=nummer&tabell=164147>.

<sup>2</sup> Some of this material formed part of the trailing research being performed as part of Norut and Eni Norway AS's Goliat project.

<sup>3</sup> One interview was conducted with colleague Ingrid Marie Kielland and another with colleague Kristin Nicolaysen.

<sup>4</sup> This particular quotation has been used in another publication: Munkejord, Mai Camilla (in review, 2nd round). «Becoming an immigrant entrepreneur in the periphery: Spatial embeddedness further explored.» Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Revised version submitted the 9th of July 2015 (in review at Entrepreneurship and Regional Development)

<sup>5</sup> 49 weeks at 100 per cent pay or 59 weeks at 80 per cent pay for children born after 1 July 2013. Paid parental leave is the right of every working person, and all employers must respect that right.

<sup>6</sup> The maximum cost for a child in Norwegian kindergarten is 2,360 Norwegian kroner per month (280 euros).

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